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Briefing 125: Wednesday 27th July, 2022.

Dear friends,

Over these weeks, we're looking at the life of the early church, and finding some lessons and challenges for us in our benefice. This week, we're thinking briefly about the way the early church **shared in the work together**.

One of the problems in the church that has sadly developed over the centuries is the idea that the minister, vicar, pastor or priest, is the one who does the work- whilst everyone else simply comes along on a Sunday and receives. In some ages, it fostered an unscriptural understanding of the Lord's supper, with the priest re-presenting the sacrifice of Jesus week after week- something that sadly, many churches still maintain. In our age, it reveals itself in a consumerist approach to church, where we search for a church with a style of worship or form of message that suits us, and where many, week after week, are giving little and doing little to support and build up the people of God in that place.

But the early church was very different. They met together in one another's houses – eating together, regularly sharing and receiving hospitality. They gave generously, even sometimes selling property or possessions so that the needs of the poor in the church family could be met. And because they were meeting in small groups, most often in people's houses, many people were able to contribute to those services. Some would bring a hymn or a word of instruction. Others would bring a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. God's Word would be read out, it would be taught clearly, people would pray, gifts would be received. Lots of people would be involved. And when it came to key roles within the church, then some were set aside for those specific ministries. The apostles (and later local pastors- See 1 Timothy and Titus) had the role of teaching and preaching. Others, like Paul and Barnabas, were set aside as evangelists and missionaries. In Acts chapter 6 we read how 7 men were chosen as deacons, to make sure the practical needs of the Greek widows were not overlooked. In the early church, many people served in many different roles.

St Paul famously describes the church as a body (1 Corinthians 12), where the one body is made up of many parts. Each part is vital. Each part has a role to play. And whilst some parts may seem to have special honour attached to them – in God's kingdom, "those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable" to the health of the body, need to be treated with special honour. And of course, the glue that holds the body together should be love. Love of God 1st of all, and love and concern for each other. Love that is patient, kind, not envious, not boastful or proud, not rude or self-seeking, not easily angered. The love that keeps no record of wrongs that delights not in evil but rejoices in the truth. The kind of love that always protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres. In a body joined together by such a love, even the most timid, the most reluctant souls might be encouraged to serve and share in the work of God's kingdom together.

Fortunately, there are many of you who already serve in many different ways in our 2 churches, but as you have heard announced again and again over recent weeks and months, there is always more to do. That is particularly true during an interregnum when the heavy weight of responsibility falls upon the shoulders of the churchwardens. They are already busy people, not just serving in their churchwarden role and carrying out those responsibilities, but active in many other ways as well: praying, witnessing, leading courses, leading services, tidying the church and caring for the buildings. I'll say more about this next week, but perhaps 1 of the best ways you can show your love for them is by asking them what you can do to serve God's family in this place.

But irrespective of a time of interregnum, the church has always been far more of a battleship than a cruise ship. On a cruise ship, the crew does all the work, whilst the vast majority of passengers are there to relax and have a holiday. But on a battleship, everyone has a task to do, a role to play. Some may be in sickbay needing care. Others may be taking a rest before resuming their duties. Perhaps some are visiting the ship, to see if battleship life is for them. But the vast majority are busy serving, giving of themselves, using their talents and gifts to be a blessing to others and to build God's kingdom here on earth. The early church was like that. Let's grow more like them over the coming days!

Grace and peace, *Dave*

IMPORTANT STUFF – DON'T JUST GLANCE- TAKE IT ALL IN!

Ladies of St Nicholas + St Mary's!
You are invited to an Evening with Queen Esther

Come to our story banquet at the Palace of St Nicholas Church on Friday 5th August at 7pm. Carriages 9:30pm.

RSVP to Judy 01438 213587 or mrsvicar16@gmail.com

Men's Curry + Golf Evening

Friday 5th August, 2022

Gents of St Nicholas + St Mary's...

You are invited to join us for a round of crazy golf at Graveley Fruit Farm at 6pm- followed by a curry in the Old Town.

If you're interested, please sign up in church or email Dave at revdmbrown@gmail.com

YOU CAN ALSO SIGN UP IN EITHER CHURCH FOR BOTH OF THE ABOVE EVENTS!

TIMES TO PRAY...

Tonight at 7pm-7:30pm This will be the last service of **Quiet Evening Prayer** for the time being: All welcome

Benefice Prayer Gathering at St Nicholas: tonight at 7:45-9pm

Next Early Morning Prayer Zoom - 7am-8am Tuesday 2nd August. Contact Dave for link

The church will also be open for visitors and private prayer on Tuesdays from 2-4pm, Wednesdays from 12noon-2pm and Thursdays from 10am-12 noon

24 HOURS OF PRAYER: as you would have heard on Sunday, we are organising a continual 24-hours of prayer from 9pm on Tuesday 9th August to 9pm on Wednesday 10th August. The focus of this will be to pray for our churches during the interregnum, for our mission, our congregations, the churchwardens and PCCs, and for all involved in choosing the next Rector. The time has been divided up into 24 one-hour slots, and whilst you can pray anywhere during your chosen time slot, we would suggest that those praying between 9pm Tuesday and 5am Wednesday pray at home, and where possible, those praying between 5am to 1pm Wednesday do so at St Mary's Graveley, whilst those praying from 1pm to 9pm come down to St Nicholas. The 24 hours of prayer will end with our regular prayer gathering taking place from 7:45pm- 9pm, and we hope many of you will come along and pray together.

Ideas for prayer topics will be made available nearer the time – but do please consider giving an hour of your time to pray. The sessions taken are the ones shown in dark colours-so there are lots of slots still free. But if you can't do any other slot, do double-up on a 'taken' time. You might also consider fasting for the whole day or for a part of this time.

Pray at home	Pray at St Mary's	Pray at St Nicholas
9pm-10pm	5am-6am	1pm-2pm
10pm – 11pm	6am-7am	2pm-3pm
11pm-midnight	7am-8am	3pm-4pm
Midnight-1am	8am-9am	4pm-5pm
1am-2am	9am-10am	5pm-6pm
2am-3am	10am-11am	6pm-7pm
3am-4am	11am-12 noon	7pm-8pm
4am-5am	12 noon–1pm	8pm-9pm

HILARY THOMPSON: When Hilary stepped down as church warden of St Mary's in April, after almost 40 years, we arranged a special flight for her. Weather permitting, this will take place on Thursday 4th August. She'll take off from the airstrip in Graveley and after a flight around the area will land at Old Warden at 3pm- where some friends will meet her for a bring and share afternoon tea. Do come along if you'd like to join us! (You will need to pay to get in!)

CABARET EVENING AT ST NICHOLAS – This Saturday 30th July from 7.00pm to 10ish, refreshments will be available or bring your own bottle - (if you would like to take part in the cabaret with a song, monologue, sketch etc please contact Martin Bailey who is coordinating the cabaret). We would very much like you to come along and take part in the evening.

DAVE AND JUDY'S LAST SUNDAY will be on Sunday 14th August. On this day we will join together for a joint service at St Nicholas at 10:30am, after which there will be a bring and share lunch. Please save the date and come along. Sign up sheets are now in church so you can say what food you will be bringing.

READINGS FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS: The readings for the next 2 weeks are as follows:

31st July: Hebrews 7: 1-28 7th August: Hebrews 8: 1-13 14th August: Revelation 1: 1-8

CHANGES TO THE PATTERN OF SUNDAY WORSHIP. A reminder that from 21st August onwards, both churches will have services of Holy Communion on the 2nd and 4th Sundays, and Services of the Word on 1st and 3rd Sundays. 5th Sundays will be joint Services of the Word- starting at 10:30am, with the venue moving between the 2 churches.

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE: URGENT NEEDS

Thank you to those people who have volunteered to join the cleaning rota at St Nicks. However, we still have these needs...

WE STILL NEED A NEW LINK PERSON FOR BRIDGE BUILDERS: Hosting Christmas and Easter Journeys has become a regular part of our church life and for the last few years, Judy has been both the link person between our churches and Bridgebuilders and the Journey Co-ordinator to make sure the events run well. Do you have the skills and enthusiasm to take on this role? If so- please speak to Judy asap.

2 PEOPLE REQUIRED AT ST NICHOLAS TO SHARE THE SETTING-UP DUTIES FOR SERVICES OF HOLY COMMUNION.

You'd need to arrive at 9am and arrange the wine, juice, water and wafers and set up the table ready for the service. Training given! See Dave asap.

PLUS - more people to join the **CHURCH SITTING ROTA** at St Nicholas, and the **SUNDAY MORNING WELCOMING TEAMS** at both St Mary's and St Nicholas. Please speak to the church wardens about these roles.

LOOSE CHANGE COLLECTION: The 'penny pot' for loose change to continue to raise money for church flowers will be in church at St Nicholas this Sunday.